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THE GERMAN POSITION

THE German note of January 11 resents the charge of "insincerity," and places the guilt of the war upon the Entente. Recounting the "encircling policy of England," the "revengeful policy of France," and "the endeavor of Russia to gain Constantinople," the note insists that the Central Powers, having taken up arms for the defense of their liberty and their existence, have already obtained these ends. It is reaffirmed that the Central Powers had been persuaded that "a peace which was just and acceptable to all the belligerents was possible," that it "could be brought about by an immediate, spoken exchange of views, and that therefore the responsibility for further bloodshed could not be taken." This note also points out that the peace conditions can be made known only "when negotiations were entered into." The Central Powers recall the fate of the Irish people, the destruction of the liberty and independence of the Boer republics, the subjugation of northern Africa by England, France, and Italy, the suppression of Russian alien nations, and the violation of Greece. England is accused of repudiating the London Declaration and the Paris Declaration. Attention is called to the war of starvation against Germany, the use of colored troops in Europe, the barbarous treatment of prisoners, especially in Africa and Russia, and the deportation of the civilian population from eastern Prussia, Alsace-Lorraine, Galicia, and Bukowina. And once again Germany comes to the defense of her behavior toward Belgium. The note closes with another statement that Germany and her allies have made an honest attempt to terminate the war and to open the road for an understanding among the belligerents. Whether the road toward peace shall be entered upon or not depends upon England and her allies.

It is easily possible to criticise this note. England cannot be properly accused of wrongful behavior in repudiating the London Declaration, which since its unofficial pronouncement she had consistently refused to approve. In what way England has repudiated the Paris Declaration does not appear. In the light of the fact that Germany herself announced at the beginning of the war the wrongfulness of her action in crossing Belgium, no explanation can ever really explain that foolish and heinous proceeding. Whatever subsequent facts may have been ascertained, Germany's motives were confessed, and the judgment of mankind upon those motives will never be reversed.

But the outstanding fact is that Germany wants peace. She has taken steps to bring it about. By this means the war-ridden world is a bit encouraged. The note says that the Central Powers are looking for a guarantee for their "honor," "existence," and "liberty of development." One thing is sure—their "honor" cannot be enhanced by continuing this dishonorable war. The same is true of their "existence" and "liberty of development." The "mutual respect" and "equal rights" for which the note pleads cannot be furthered by the ruthless, wanton killing of more and still more unoffending boys.

But here again, let us add, further peace talk is more easily possible because of the peace talk already begun. This peace talk will continue. The "hour of negotiations" will come some time. Both sides to the controversy have been stirred by the attempt of the President of the United States to "bring a new light into the affairs of the world."

WHY NOT DISCUSS PEACE?

SHALL the belligerents discuss peace or shall the belligerents not discuss peace? That is the question.

The long speeches in the Senate, and the long editorials in the long lists of newspapers have devoted much time to the discussion of President Wilson's note of December 18. The number of arguments against the wisdom of the note has been surprisingly large. But it is possible to condense them into Senator Lodge's fears for the Monroe Doctrine, his antipathy to the Germans, and his concern for our ancient principle of avoiding entangling alliances, and into Mr. Borah's able argument, the most of which grew out of his opposition to the League to Enforce Peace, which league he considered supported by the President's note. We may add what seems to be another dominant opposition, namely, a feeling that we in America are or ought to be in sympathy with the Allies; that the Allies are not particularly concerned about terms. The Allies have one dominant interest, which is to win this war, and therefore we should keep still.

These are all very interesting points, and perfectly reasonable but for one thing. They have nothing to do with the President's note.

President Wilson's note carefully expressed friendship for all the belligerents. It set forth that there are interests of the United States which are affected. It expressed curiosity about the things in detail for which the European States are fighting. But the note had one purpose, and one purpose only: it asked the belligerents to avow their respective views in two particulars—first, as to the terms upon which the war can be concluded; second, as to the guarantees against its renewal. It is true that the President expressed himself as willing to take the initiative in making such an avowal possible. So far as the general objects for which both sides are fighting, namely, independence, territorial integrity, political and commercial freedom, the